

VZCZCXRO4992
OO RUEHBW RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHMO #1499/01 1491325
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281325Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8268
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 001499

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: RUSSIAN REACTION TO UNOMIG REPORT; GIVES
POSITIVE MESSAGE TO EU SPECIAL ENVOY SEMNEBY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4(b) and
(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Following two days of meetings in Moscow, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby told the Charge that the Russians seemed to be trying to send a more positive, forward-leaning message in an effort to begin a process that would lead to an agreement on non-use of force. Semneby said that Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin appeared open to considering a new, complementary negotiating format, provided the Joint Control Commission could be reinvigorated. EU High Rep Solana may travel to Tbilisi and Sukhumi June 5-6. The presence of Karasin and other senior MFA officials, along with the reading of a congratulatory message from President Medvedev, at the Georgian national day reception in Moscow was another positive gesture. At the same time, the MFA predictably refuted the conclusions of the UNOMIG report that a Russian aircraft shot down an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia April 20, questioning the impartiality of U.S. and Baltic experts, but highlighted the portion of the report that said such UAV flights were "military actions" and violated the 1994 Moscow Agreement. End summary.

MFA Shows EU Envoy Semneby More Positive Attitude

¶2. (C) EU Special Envoy for the Caucasus Peter Semneby told the Charge May 27 that Karasin had been more relaxed in their meeting that day, saying Russia had viewed Georgian Envoy Alasania's visit to Georgia and Abkhazia positively and hoped it would lead to a process that could result in an agreement on non-use of force. Semneby had replied that getting the Georgians to agree to a non-use of force pledge would require the Russians to bring their forces down to their previous level. Karasin reiterated Russian arguments that the Presidential Instruction and the steps taken thereafter had not violated any formal legal commitments, but continued to indicate that Russian actions would stop short of full recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He added that implementation of the measures would take a long time.

¶3. (C) Semneby said Karasin seemed more open to the possibility of complementing the negotiating format with additional mechanisms. Semneby had told him the parties needed to break the deadlock and the current negotiating formats had been created at a different time, with different circumstances and actors. Now, it was necessary to take account of the reality on the ground, and establish a new format, not as a replacement for the existing mechanisms, but as a complement to them. Karasin responded that once the Joint Control Commission was reinvigorated, and really met, he could consider looking at complementary formats. The Russians, Semneby said, appeared to be "in waiting mode."

¶4. (C) Semneby said he saw the non-use of force agreement as the cornerstone for further progress, and that Alasania had agreed. Semneby also emphasized the importance of direct

Georgia-Abkhaz communications links, as well as links to outside countries, such as Turkey. He had told Karasin that such links and other elements of the Georgian "peace plan," such as the idea of a free economic zone straddling south Abkhazia and adjacent parts of Georgia, could be topics for bilateral discussions. It was not necessary to view the plan as a complete take-it-or-leave-it package. The Charge noted it was encouraging that the GOR was willing to discuss specifics of the peace plan, rather than simply insisting it should have been presented to the Abkhaz first.

15. (C) Semneby concurred that Abkhazia did not want to be absorbed into Russia. He commented that he had found a sense of exasperation and discomfort at the situation among some of the more ideologically-minded leaders in Abkhazia. He added that when he had last spoken to the Georgians, they had been cool to the idea of UNOMIG being given the ability to send drones over the conflict zone, conveying the information back to both Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Georgia was concerned the drones would be used to report on Georgian forces in the Kodori Gorge rather than on Russian troops in Abkhazia.

16. (C) Semneby said he would travel to Georgia the following week, and that EU High Rep Solana might go to Tbilisi and Sukhumi June 5-6. This would demonstrate EU interest and commitment and reassure the Georgians and Abkhazians, even though the EU was having a difficult time convincing the Georgians that the EU had an important, positive role to play. Charge said it was important that the U.S. and EU speak with one voice, and noted DAS Bryza would be in Moscow the same dates.

MOSCOW 00001499 002 OF 002

17. (C) Uncharacteristically, senior MFA officials attended the Georgian National Day reception the evening of May 26, and DFM Karasin read a congratulatory message from President Medvedev. Karasin privately stated that he hoped the situation would calm down and normalize, but that "it takes two to dance." When asked if his presence at the reception could be interpreted as an invitation to dance, Karasin replied "yes."

GOR Denies UNOMIG Conclusions on Russian Aircraft

18. (SBU) At the same time, Russia continues to question reports that one of its aircraft shot down a Georgian UAV last month. On May 27, the MFA issued a response to the report of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) regarding the shoot-down of a UAV over Abkhazia April 20. The statement highlighted the portion of the report that said that the overflight of the zone of conflict by surveillance aircraft were "military actions" and constituted a breach of the 1994 Moscow Agreement, and the part that identified the drone as a Hermes 450 belonging to the Georgian government. It noted that Abkhazia had already brought down seven such drones but the report had only confirmed three as Hermes 450's. The report questioned the impartiality of U.S. and Baltic experts in analyzing the data, linking the UAV analysis to that of the August 2007 missile incident in Kodori Gorge - which the GOR also claimed was fabricated. The statement denied the portion of the report concluding that a Russian aircraft had likely shot down the drone. Earlier, MOD Spokesman Col. Aleksandr Drobyshevsky had denied that a Russian airplane had entered Georgian airspace or destroyed the UAV.

19. (C) Dmitriy Tarabrin, MFA Deputy Director for 4th CIS, told us May 27 that the GOR doubted the veracity of the video and of the Georgian radar information indicating the flight had likely originated from Russian airspace and/or the Gadauta base. Russian radar had shown no flights from the Russian side on the day in question, and Russia "had no planes at Gadauta." He acknowledged that Karasin's and other GOR officials' presence at the May 26 Georgian national day

reception were intended to lower the temperature, but said there were no other meetings or outreach currently planned.
RUSSELL